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(And If You Don't Like It They'll Spray Gas In Your Face!)

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Gore's Platform

The last rousing party political platform in America was probably the Populists' in 1892, written mostly by Ignatius Donnelly, and concluding its preamble thus: "The fruits of the toil of millions are boldly stolen to build up colossal fortunes for a few, unprecedented in the history of mankind; and the possessors of those, in turn, despise the Republic and endanger liberty. From the same prolific womb of government injustice we breed the two great classes —tramps and millionaires."

The national platform Al Gore's drafting team has served up to the Democratic Party has only the merit of truth in packaging. In nearly every respect it is an unashamed assault on what once were the core constituencies of the party: working people, blacks, organized labor, peace activists, greens, the poor. Gone now are the days when the leadership of the Democratic Party was briefly encumbered by a progressive platform that its national candidates would have to delay a week after the convention before discarding.

This shouldn't surprise us. Despite Gore's cyber-call a few months ago for "an interactive platform" that would be constructed on the Internet by party members from across the nation, the first draft was scripted by Elaine Kamarck, a former wonk at the Public Policy Institute, the whitepaper division of the Democratic Leadership Council.

The Democratic National Committee's platform committee, which gathered in St. Louis on July 7 and 8, was headed by Jim Hunt, governor of North Carolina, and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, the Lt. Governor of Maryland. Both Townsend and Hunt covet a spot as Gore's running mate.

The 41-page document opens by preaching the chief tenet of Gore's political philosophy: namely that he wants to rule over "a smaller, more efficient, less bureaucratic government" that eschews "big government solutions" and emphasizes "the private sector as the main engine of economic growth". No talk here of the New Deal. In its place, the platform calls for government to act not as a defender of the downtrodden and disenfranchised, but as a mechanic for the "engines of a new global economy" by greasing "the lifelines of American commerce" so that "private businesses can prosper".

Globalization is accorded a passionate embrace. Although the sensitive topic of China is delicately sidestepped, the document proudly touts Gore's role in brokering "more than 200 trade agreements, including NAFTA and GATT", and vows to secure "fast track authority" so that he can freelance new deals with nations such as Chile and Brazil. The only scraps tossed organized labor were some tepid phrases promising environmental and worker-rights side-agreements in future pacts.

Domestically, the goal of Gore's economic policy is a fanatic quest to "eliminate the federal debt". The economic planks resemble an austerity program cooked up by the IMF for Bulgaria. It is shorn of any commitment to reinvest the swelling budget surplus into programs for the greater public good. The normally prudent Jeff Faux of the Economic Policy Institute has described Gore's plan as "an economic plan to the right of Herbert Hoover". The platform exults over the dismantling of the federal welfare program and vows to keep up the war on the poor by cracking down on "food stamp fraud".

Still, there are two recipients the Gore platform is eager to ply with federal dollars: the military and law enforcement. The platform endorses Gore's notion of "forward engagement," an interventionist for-

(**Platform** continued on page 6)

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Our Little Secrets

Biowar Meets the NYT

Weeks after CounterPunch's June expose of war criminal and drug czar Barry McCaffrey's plan to wage biological warfare on Colombia by releasing mycoherbicides in coca-growing areas, the New York Times' Tim Golden has belatedly caught up with the story. True to form, Golden made every effort to obscure the more horrifying aspects of McCaffrey's scheme.

As we reported, the US government plans to introduce a strain of the fungus fusarium oxysporum called EN4 into Colombia in the hope that this strain will attack and wipe out the local coca crop. The Colombian aid bill that finally prevailed in Congress, with the infamous support of most Democrats, includes a provision requiring the Colombians to take EN4 along with the helicopters and money.

Colombian scientists are aghast, pointing out that EN4 will almost certainly extend its toxic reach beyond the targeted coca plant, since there is no evidence that it is "host specific"; that is, restricted in its assaults to the intended victim. It may therefore quite possibly spread to species related to the cocaine-producing plants, with profound and disastrous effects on the ecology of the region, not to mention the human population.

Fusarium oxysporum is highly poisonous to anyone eating infected plants. A mysterious outbreak in Peru in the early 1990s, shortly after inhabitants of the affected area saw helicopters spraying coca fields, rapidly spread to food crops, causing sickness among people and farm animals that consumed them.

Well aware of the risks in their biowar plan, not least that of being charged with violating the biological weapons convention, the US has recruited a UN agency, the UN Drug Control Program, into acting as a front for the enterprise. Funding for the program being pushed on the Colombians will be channeled through this UN office, thus giving an "international" fig leaf to the project—although no other country has yet to give support or funding, despite a plea from Madeleine Albright last year.

In his New York Times article Golden is quick to assert that "several plant pathologists who have studied the fungus extensively said there was little scientific basis for the assertions about its danger." Golden could not have looked very far. One plant pathologist who would indeed assert that there is little scientific evidence for danger is David C. Sands, a professor from Montana State University, who originally identified EN4 after an outbreak at a research station in Hawai'i in the early 1980s. Ever since then he has been seeking to market EN4 an anti-drug mycoherbicide.

Last year Sands came close to selling a program using another strain of fusarium to the Florida drug control authorities, until the state Environmental Protection Program pointed out that the mycoherbicide could easily spread to Florida's agricultural cash crops.

According to researcher Jeremy Bigwood, a ranking authority on the fusarium issue, Sands has threatened Colombian academics protesting the introduction of the bio-weapon into their country. He says Sands has also been working Capitol Hill with McCaffrey's enthusiastic support, bolstering the legislators into their shameful assent to a provision in the Colombian aid bill requiring the hapless Colombians to cooperate in the destruction of their country's ecosystem.

Pentagon's Info War

Jim Redden reports that the US government is laying the groundwork to knock inconvenient voices off line during the next international military confrontation.

You can't blame the folks over at Antiwar.com for feeling paranoid these days. The libertarian-oriented, anti-military website hosted its second annual conference on March 24 and 25. Held at the Villa Hotel in San Mateo, , the theme of the conference was "Beyond Left & Right: The New Face of the Antiwar Movement". Among the speakers was Alexander Cockburn who gave an account of the event to CounterPunchers shortly thereafter.

A short time later, Antiwar.com founder Eric Garris was startled to learn that his site had been added to a list of "militia-related" websites maintained by Mark Pitcavage, research director for the federally-funded State/Local Anti-Terrorism Training (SLATT) program. CounterPunch reported on Pitcavage's curious operation in its May 1-15 issue. Then in late May, the software for counting the number of visitors to Antiwar.com crashed two days in a row. The reason? An unusually high number of hits from a single visitor.

When columnist Justin Raimondo tracked down the curious party, he discovered it was a Pentagon-funded unit of cyber-soldiers known as the Army Computer Emergency Response Team. The counter crashed after recording 2,000 hits from ACERT on the first day alone. Every file on the website was visited at least once. CounterPunch contacted ACERT headquarters and reached public affairs assistant Shirley K. Startzman who confirmed the military had prowled Antiwar.com. She said ACERT uses commercially available web search tools to "continuously research for websites on the Internet that may have information relating to potential cyber threats." Startzman claimed that this work is "defensive in nature", intended to "protect Army computer systems from hackers or denial of service attacks".

As Startzman put it, "The Antiwar website was one of many on the publicly accessible Internet the tool identified as having information potentially related to

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Hershaft believes that while it's going too far to liberate mink from fur farms in the US, it's okay to bomb Serbia into submission in order to save pets and farm animals in Kosovo.

cyber defense. The high numbers of hits reflect this automated search tool." Later she added that "the commercially available tool we used in this particular case is called Themescape. Its website is www.cartia.com." Garris and Raimondo aren't buying this explanation.

Despite Startzman's insistence that ACERT is "defensive in nature", it is part of a much larger military system. Cyberwarfare is a relatively new idea. It first surfaced as a public issue in 1988 when the Morris Worm computer virus disabled approximately 10 per cent of all computers connected to the Internet. Fearful of the vulnerability of the government's vast computer networks to such attacks, the Pentagon turned to the Software Engineering Institute, a federally-funded research center based at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

By the end of the year, SEI was officially designated as the Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center (CERT/CC), providing research and assistance to the government and anyone else wanting to prevent viruses and other attacks from crippling their computers. The Pentagon soon decided to concentrate its emerging cyber-warfare operations under the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), which was created in 1977 to coordinate all of the military's intelligence-gathering operations. INSCOM moved to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, in the summer of 1989.

Then the Pentagon began to plan its own Internet attacks. The idea was first fleshed out in a 1996 paper published by the National Defense University Press called "Information Terrorism: Can You Trust Your Toaster?" It was written by Matthew G. Devost of the Information Systems and Technology Group, and Brian K. Houghton and Neal A. Pollard, of the Science Applications International Corporation's Strategic Assessment Center.

The authors created a scenario, a war story set in the Internet, pitting "information terrorists" against heroic cyber-warriors in the service of Uncle Sam. By an amazing coincidence, the bad guys in the fictional story maintain a website which sounds a lot like a government version of what Antiwar.com was doing at the time: "The Web page was dramatic and rife with propaganda and claims against American, NATO, and Croatian imperialism and atrocities in the Balkan region, and included questionable allegations of illegal arms transfers between NATO governments and Bosnian Muslims and Croats."

To counter this sinister abuse of the First Amendment the authors said the U.S. military should create a "specialized and integrated counter information terrorism group", which they called DIRT (Digital Integrated Response Team). As the authors excitedly put it, "These highly trained information warriors would be the national security equivalent of Carnegie-Mellon University's Computer Emergency Response Team, but with an offensive capability".

After studying this scenario, the Pentagon duly created ACERT the following year. An article on the ribbon-cutting ceremony titled "Protecting Electronic Borders" appeared in the March-April 1997 issue of the Journal of INSCOM. "Information dominance took a giant leap into the future March 17, when the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command ceremoniously opened the Army Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center at Fort Belvoir, Va. Its mission is to re-write the books on how the Army handles the newest threat in the field manuals - computer hackers." The INSCOM Journal reported that "A hacker demonstration was conducted as part of the ribbon-cutting ceremony. An ACERT/CC computer security expert conducted the demonstration, saying that you have to 'think like a hacker and try to break into a system'".

That's what Garris and Raimondo think ACERT is preparing to do -- to hack into Antiwar.com and disable it, along with other sites that excite the displeasure of the National Security apparat.

VEGGIES BOO BATGIRL

From July 1 through 5, several thousand animal defenders from across the nation mustered at the McLean Virginia Hilton for the "Animal Rights 2000" conference. The star attraction was Alicia Silverstone, the zaftig actress who turned to veganism in order to squeeze into her "Batgirl" costume. She gave the keynote address, where she advised that it was important for all vegans "to look as good as possible, because it will help the animals". Then Silverstone warned "It's important not to be too outrageous."

This admonition prompted several members of the radical Animal Liberation Front to boo the actress as a sell out. By all accounts, the young actress didn't handle this critical review of her performance with much aplomb. Tears welling in her eyes, she summoned hotel security to escort her to her room, where she immediately booked a flight back to LA. The organizers worked hard to keep the heckling of Silverstone out of the press.

That same day Alex Hershaft, leader of FARM, the Bethesda-based farm animal protection group, issued a similar denunciation of radical tactics, denouncing monkey-wrenching and sabotage of medical research labs, fur farms and the like.

Silverstone and Hershaft's comments followed news of the extradition from Belgium of Justin Samuel, a 22-year-old animal liberator from Seattle, to face federal charges in Iowa for releasing 12,000 mink from fur farms in the midwest. Samuel, who merely opened gates at the farms, is charged with four counts of "animal enterprise terrorism" and "disruption of interstate commerce". If convicted, he faces the prospect of spending 82 years in federal prison.

But Hershaft believes that while it's going too far to liberate mink from fur farms in the US, it's okay to bomb Serbia into submission in order to save pets and farm animals in Kosovo. In an April 22 posting on the Animal Rights mailing list, Hershaft excoriated activists who were preparing to join anti-war demonstrations in DC. "Although the bombing will hurt some innocent Serbs (and some animals), the only way to stop the monstrosities perpetrated against 1.8 million ethnic Albanians (and uncounted animals) is to cut off the monster's head." Is this a call for vegetarian interventionism?

For CounterPunch's position on the meat question, see page 4. CP

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A CounterPunch Journey Through the Alimentary Canal

Why You Can't Buy Good Sausage

BY ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Out here on the north coast of California serious carnivores have meat lockers. How else could one accommodate a hog and a quarter steer bought at the Humboldt county fair last August) two 25-lb turkeys that failed to make the grade as Best of Show at the same fair last year and sold to me by 4H-ers Cassandra and Alaina Hoisington for $100, pheasant, four lambs raised by my neighbor Greg Smith, sausage casings, fatback, and a whole goat that went too far and finished off three fruit trees and half a vegetable garden.

I was hauling this same goat out of the freezer room at my local meat storage and processing place for July 4 spit-roasting by Greg and Margie Smith at their July 4 bash when I started chatting with Bob, the proprietor of a small wholesale meat establishment, about the sausage-maker in San Leandro who'd just killed three government food inspectors, two of them, a man and a woman, federal employees from the USDA, and one other man from California's Department of Food and Agriculture.

On June 21 Stuart Alexander, proprietor of the Santos Linguisa Factory, murdered these unfortunate regulators while failing to dispatch a fourth fellow, whom he'd vainly pursued down the road waving his Beretta. He's now awaiting trial. I remarked to Bob that Mr Alexander seemed to have had a rough passage with the food inspectors. At the time of the killings he was operating his factory without a license and outside it was a defiant sign put up by Alexander complaining that he had been unreasonably hassled by the health police.

Bob didn't bother overmuch with dutiful noises about the tragedy of it all. He did say that given the fact that Alexander had been on the receiving end of government harassment for quite a time, he could understand what his fellow butcher had been going through. Over the past three years, partly in response to some deaths among patrons of a Jack in the Box fast food outlet in the state of Washington, the USDA has been imposing a whole new batch of regulations, such as higher temperatures for food processing. "Frankly, Alex", Bob said, "if the standards imposed on small and medium meat processors had stayed the way they were written at the end of last year, I'd be out of business today and so would about 90 per cent of the meat processors of my size."

The feds are red-taping small meat businesses into a nightmare labyrinth of "voluntary compliance" schedules and record keeping, most of which are unnecessary and in some cases entirely wrong-headed. Even though there are strong arguments for maple chopping blocks, Bob and his fellow butchers are forced to use either rubber or plastic surfaces that sweat unhealthily and are hell on knives.

No surprises here. A lot of the history of food regulation in this country has turned out to be a way to finish off small-size quality producers by demanding they invest in whatever big ticket items the USDA happens to be in love with at the time, said love objects usually turning out to be whatever the big food processors are using. It's the reason why it's hard to get decent sausages or hams.

There have been health problems down the years, there's no denying. The meat inspection act of 1906 gave inspectors from the Department of Agriculture the power to inspect meat-packing. The act was passed after public outcry following the publication of Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle". Sinclair was hoping to expose the horrible degradation of workers in the slaughterhouses: "There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from the leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race upon it... These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them, they would die, and then rats, bread and meat would go into the hoppers together."

The public was unmoved about the packers but very concerned over rats in the sausage. Teddy Roosevelt successfully turned the shock over these new inhumane food factories into a small "consumer protection" issue. The meat inspectors became readily domesticated by the meat factory owners but could take out their frustrations when dealing with small one-of-a-kind artisans. The same lapdog inspector who could be marched across the killing floors of Armour or Swift without raising a bleat became a mighty lion of public health when dealing with a real butcher or sausage maker.

The same lapdog inspector who could be marched across the killing floors of Armour or Swift without raising a bleat became a mighty lion of public health when dealing with a real butcher or sausage maker.

The big packers and processing plants get to participate directly in the writing of the laws that set the standard practices that the inspectors march out to enforce on all the little producers not part of the Meat Syndicate.

Remember, over 70 per cent of the hamburgers, wieners, beef or pork ribs, chickens, and lamb racks that went on those July 4 grills went through a handful of packing companies across the country. Four out of every five beef cattle are slaughtered by IBP, ConAgra, Cargill and Farmland Beef. Six firms, led by Tyson and Gold Kist, Perdue, ConAgra and Cargill, process half the nation's chickens. Three out of every five hogs are slaughtered by Murphy Family Farms, Carroll's Foods, Continental Grain and Smithland Foods.

These big packers are cozy with presidents and governors and chairmen of congressional committees. The day that they

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decide the safer sausage is a nuked sausage, only sausages labeled "Real" (the official symbol for irradiated food) will be legal. Until then, the name of the game for the regulators is to find out what machines and temperatures are standard for Big Meat and rush out to close the little folk down if they have not already bankrupted themselves by having to buy the new equipment.

The plan to require the irradiation of all sausages is just one of many Mad Ideas waiting in the wings. Health departments are working themselves up to require all food handlers to dip their hands in a little vat of poisonous liquid glove compound. There are plans for national legislation to require foreign berries to be dipped in a bleach bath. Other health "experts" recommend that we all wash our lettuce in a bleach bath and that restaurants be required to do so.

My friends and neighbors, Karen and Joe Paff, are coffee roasters (Goldrush, official coffee of CounterPunch, order form available on request) and run a couple of espresso walk/drive-throughs in Eureka. They are regularly made crazy by the health regulators who can suddenly require that they dump all their milk because it's 2 degrees too warm, even though the places are so busy the milk is delivered daily.

Ever wonder what happened to those beautiful old hand-pull espresso machines? Since they don't have NSF or UI stickers most health departments won't allow them. Even if their own rules state "NSF or equivalent" they'll refuse to permit such an option, preferring to order the espresso maker to go and buy an expensive new machine. Health departments had sidled into the new espresso bar business by claiming that an ambient fly could dart across the top of a steam pitcher and execute a flying dump or kamikaze dive. This allowed them to collect fees and up the cost of the little stand by $20,000 or so.

Wherever you are, compare the espresso vendor with the hot dog vendor on your street corner. So confident in the USDA-inspected-and-approved sausage – the dead little object appropriately called "wiener" – are local health departments that pretty much any hot dog stand at all is readily approved. For good reason. Hot dogs have been found in perfect condition buried in landfills. This is not considered a sign of worry or consternation about hot dog standards but a triumph of modern chemistry.

These 'cleanliness standards' are aesthetically based. There'll always be mouse shit in stored grain. The government inspectors know that, and they're not about to close down every grain silo in America.

You can blame a lot of the food hysteria on Louis Pasteur, a malevolent fraud who persuaded the world that bacteria are the enemy of Man. He espoused this position when a handful of better scientists were arguing that bacteria are our indispensable companions on this earth and if they weren't lodged in our colons and elsewhere our digestive processes would fail and we would die, soil would not be fertile and so forth. Pasteur labored to discredit these opponents by dishonest means and, largely, he prevailed. The pasteurization madness was upon us. The more you pasteurize and try to wipe out bacteria, the lower your resistance gets. There have been experiments where they raise mice in entirely sterile, bacteria-free conditions. When they release them they die in a few days.

Detecting truly dangerous pathogens is an expensive and lengthy business. So government regulators pick on the easiest bacteria to spot. These are E coli, which are almost entirely benign, barring the one rare strain that has been involved in some dangerous outbreaks. Every few months you find an article blaring that E coli are rife. Of course they are. E coli are everywhere, in the dirt, in the water, in food, in your gut, and indeed they had better be in your gut otherwise you'd be dead.

If we died from E coli, every Englishman who ever ate a high pheasant would have passed on shortly thereafter. But the government regulators look for E coli and when they find them in sufficient number they infer that dangerous pathogens might also be present. It's guesswork and mostly wrong. The detergents, anti-bacterial soaps and chemicals used to save us from these germs are more dangerous than anything, as are the chemicals the USDA inspectors force butchers to swab off their walls with.

These "cleanliness standards" are aesthetically based. For example, there'll always be mouse shit in stored grain. The government inspectors know that, and they're not about to close down every grain silo in America. So they set an arbitrary standard of how much mouse shit is tolerable. Stay below that percentage, maybe by .0001 per cent and the flour gets a top rating for organic purity. Drift above the benchmark by .0001 per cent and you have grim news bulletins about vermin feces in the family loaf.

Back in the Middle Ages peasants lived among or above their stock and exchanged bacteria with them on a regular basis, thus building up their immunities. When I grew up in Ireland my mother was firmly of the opinion that excessive fussing about "germs" was stupid and in the long term dangerous to one's overall health. CounterPuncher Pierre Sprey, who first acquainted me with the noxious role of Pasteur, makes a point of eating raw steak and raw eggs every week bought at the local supermarket and has been in flourishing health in consequence. But if the USDA and Pasteur nuts have their way, Americans will be like those laboratory mice and all that will be left of this great nation are cockroaches feeding on those USDA-approved wieners. CP

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eign policy strategy so robust that it might make Henry Kissinger blush. Last year's remote-control war against Serbia is offered up as a template for Gore's own brand of cruise missile diplomacy.

The platform also contains several hyperventilating paragraphs on the threat of "evil" and "rogue" states, namely the old standbys Iran, Iraq and North Korea. These "irrational" nations, the platform argues, compel the US to pump more than $60 billion into a version of the Star Wars scheme currently the object of universal public derision after the last disastrous test.

As the nation's top serial killer, George Bush is vulnerable on the death penalty. The 2000 Democratic platform ensures that this will never be exploited an issue in the campaign. While the platform calls for DNA testing of death row prisoners, it is unwavering in its support for the federal death penalty and boasts that Clinton and Gore have "expanded the death penalty for 60 crimes".

That's not all. The platform brags about the passage of a federal "three-strikes-you're out law" and Gore's role in securing legislation that "places limits on appeals", i.e., eliminates habeas corpus. It touts a plan to dole out $14 billion in grants to states so that they can expand their prisons, overflowing with inmates from the insane war on drugs. But the money would come with strings attached. After they sign the receipt for the check, the states must agree that inmates in the prisons will serve at least 85 per cent of their term. In other words, the platform proposes to blackmail states into ending parole.

It used to be the Republicans who waged war on the National Education Association. Now the Democrats have taken up the cudgel and are relentlessly flailing away at public school teachers. Under the Democrats' plan, teachers are to be "rigorously" tested and forced to meet "tough" certification standards. Those that fail are to be summarily terminated, apparently with little recourse to appeal. The platform calls for "an end to endless delays in the removing of those teachers that need to be removed". A similar sanction is envisioned for public schools that don't meet federal requirements. They would simply be shut down. The platform also endorses "private religious expression in the classroom".

Gore's energy plan is glutted with tax breaks for energy companies represented by Katie McGinty's law firm.

Tipper gets a few planks, too. Mental illness, teen pregnancies and single-parent families are singled out as threats to the nation's social fabric, to be driven back by mandated therapy, infusions of Prozac and more "personal responsibility". The entertainment industry comes in for a tongue-lashing and the platform touts such measures as the "V-Chip" and ratings for television shows as examples of the Gores' vigilance in the culture wars.

The environment gets more space in this platform than any since Jimmy Carter's in 1980. But most of it is given over to banal homilies recycled from Gore's Earth In the Balance. With gas prices soaring, we would expect Gore could at least come up with some populist rhetoric. Yet the best the platform can muster is an energy plan crafted by former Gore staffer Katie McGinty which gives huge tax breaks to natural gas producers in the Gulf of Mexico. The scheme won't reduce prices, but it will beef up the bottom line of the power companies mustered together in the Alliance for Power Privatization, which is a chief client of McGinty's new law firm.

The Gore platform proclaims that "we can expand the economy and protect the environment" at the same time. What this goal really means, the platform reveals, is finding a way of "protecting the environment without trapping business in a tangle of red tape" — red tape in this instance meaning the Endangered Species Act and other laws that inconvenience the rape and pillage crowd.

So the stage is set for Gore's coronation in Los Angeles in August, in a city whose Republican mayor, Richard Riordan, is seeking legal avenues towards the criminalization of all rights of assembly and free speech. Riordan is plainly torn between the desire to have the Democratic convention engulfed in an anarchic melee, and the fear that this melee might reflect badly on himself and his police, who will be massed with billy clubs, pepper spray and tear gas to ensure placid reception of the platform and its sponsor. CP

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